**Empress Dowager Cixi**

**Empress Xiao Qin Cian 11 November 1861 - 15 November 1908**

Empress Dowager Cixi1 (29 November 1835 – 15 November 1908), of the Manchu Yehe Nara Clan, was a powerful and charismatic figure who became the de facto ruler of the Manchu Qing Dynasty in China for 47 years from 1861 to her death in 1908.

Selected by the Xianfeng Emperor as a concubine in her adolescence, she climbed the ranks of Xianfeng's harem and gave birth to a son who became the Tongzhi Emperor upon Xianfeng's death. Cixi ousted a group of regents appointed by the late emperor and assumed regency over her young son with the Empress Dowager Ci'an. Cixi then consolidated control and established near-absolute rule over the dynasty. She installed her nephew as the Guangxu Emperor in 1875.

A conservative ruler who refused to adopt Western models of government, Cixi rejected reformist views and placed Guangxu under house arrest in later years for supporting reformers. However, after a humiliating clash with the Eight-Nation Alliance, external and internal pressures led Cixi to attempt institutional changes and appoint reform-minded officials. Ultimately, the Qing Dynasty collapsed a few years after her death.

Historians from both Kuomintang and Communist backgrounds have generally portrayed her as a despot and villain responsible for the fall of the Qing Dynasty, but in recent years professional historians have suggested that she was a scapegoat for problems beyond her control, a leader no more ruthless than others, and in fact an effective if reluctant reformer in the last years of her life.

The exact origins of Empress Dowager Cixi are unclear, but most biographies claim that she was the daughter of a low-ranking Manchu official named Huizheng of a Manchu clan, and his principal wife, who belonged to the Manchu Fucha clan.

On November 15th of 1908, the day after the death of Emperor Guangxu, Empress Dowager Cixi died in the afternoon.